

FAMILY COUNCIL GUIDELINES

Pearl Philipps, FACS State Specialist, Utah State Office of Education

There is no better way to bring about family unity than sitting down with your family together to plan work and activities, whether just once a week or a few minutes each day. The meeting may be formal enough to use an agenda with an appointed secretary to keep minutes (See the Family Council Agenda) or an informal discussion with a parent keeping notes. Sometimes one parent must be absent for extended periods of time. This is when planning and anticipation of shared family activities is most vital. Here are some suggestions of topics for family meetings. Choose those that are right for your family or add others as needed:

Calendar of events

Meals and menus

Family rules

Work schedules and job lists

Home improvement and maintenance

Family finances and shopping

Individual activities and recreation

Goal setting

Sunday may be the best time for a family council. You might begin with a song, prayer, and a spiritual thought. As you share what is important to you and plan the week's activities, it will bring peace and confidence to your children. As your plans get underway for daily work, you will have more time for family fun.

REMEMBER

Family Councils are the best place for inter-family relationships, but you need to follow a few basic guidelines. All must agree up front to listen carefully to everything that is being said. No one is allowed to interrupt, attack, cut someone off, or criticize before it's his or her turn. No one is better or more important than anyone else. Everyone is treated with respect. Family members can learn to know and to love and appreciate one another when they know that their thoughts and ideas are being heard by others in their family. It can be a time for real togetherness.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Keep a calendar of holidays, birthdays, weddings, and all special events for your family. Write the days and time of doctor or dentist appointments, ball practices, or piano lessons. Usually some give and take is needed as conflicts arise; decisions made ahead of time are better kept and help avoid anger and disappointment. Work schedules can be arranged and transportation managed in your Family Council meetings.

MEALS AND MENUS

Decide what your family will eat during the coming week and make assignments.

- Who will write the menus listing foods for each day?
- Who will purchase or bring the food from the garden?
- Who will prepare it and set the table?
- Who will clear the table and do the dishes?
- If you decide to eat out as a family, who will plan for the occasion and decide when and where your family will go and how it will fit into the family budget?

FAMILY RULES

Decide what rules you need for your family and write them down where all can see them.

- Plan for limits to telephone conversations, TV watching, and computer games.
- Talk about the value of self-discipline and preparing for successful careers. (The best time for parents to control what children are watching on TV is in a family meeting, not while young ones are already into a favorite program.)
- Decide who drives the car and when, who pays for the gas, and who does car maintenance.
- Set regular bedtime, study time, chore time, and times to have friends over to play.

WORK SCHEDULES AND JOB LISTS

A family job list can relieve endless arguments and take the drudgery out of repeated household tasks. Family members love rewards, appreciation notes, and recompenses for the completion of these tasks. Children can learn to finish daily work in anticipation of family outings, cultural events, or ball games. Mark off daily assignments with stars or stickers for small children. Anticipation of pleasant experiences is a great motivator for family fun! A family that works together stays together. Start with this:

- Write on the calendar when each one is expected to be away from home for work
- Set up a plan for laundry and review it regularly. It will give children a sense of security to know that they have clean clothing when it is needed. It also may encourage parents to develop the same discipline required of children—like always putting dirty clothes in the hamper or sorting white and dark clothing.
- Who cleans the bathroom each week?
- Who shovels snow from the driveway, rakes leaves, or cuts the lawn?
- Who collects the trash and takes out the garbage?
- Who feeds the cat, dog or goldfish?

HOME IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

As children learn to do many of the tasks around the house rather than hiring them done, they gain a great sense of achievement. The costs and time involved may not always make sense; but, as children work at the repairs, they gain a sense of appreciation for the skills of those who do this work professionally. Practical work experience often helps a child know which profession he will follow as an adult. Use the following guidelines:

- Let children help make a list of repairs needed, such as mending corners of fitted sheets, mending rips in their clothes or pillow cases, fixing loose door knobs, filling in cracks in cement, cleaning carpet stains, or painting a dresser.
- Parents may then determine major repairs like new roofing, carpets, or wallpaper.
- Decide which ones can be done first, who will do them, and when.
- Estimate how much money the repairs will cost and how to pay them.
- Set a time each week or month for such work on a continuing basis.

FAMILY FINANCES AND SHOPPING

- Review each week's major expenditures and write down what has been spent each month. Total up each area of expense like food, clothing, travel, car and house payments, recreation, savings, miscellaneous, and charity. (Remember you are poor only if you have nothing to give another.)
- Make lists of future needs of your family as well as the wants of each one. Decide which ones will be purchased first and an approximate time for others.
- Determine outstanding debts and how the payments will be made.

- If too much is being spent in one area, talk it over with your family and get their ideas about how the family can change their spending habits.
- Talk about how your family might be able to earn more.
- Review the plan each month and set new goals.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES AND RECREATION

- A part of each Family Council should be to review the activities and recreation as well as the work expected of each person. List each event of the calendar.
- Talk about the balance of work and play and the values of each. (Remember recreation means to re-create something that is worn out or missing from one's life.)
- Talk about each one's favorite activities, whether music, art, sports, reading, or games.
- Don't let your plans become too binding. Sometimes it's a great satisfaction to drop everything and do something fun for a change without planning ahead. Just remember to keep your overall goals in mind.

GOAL SETTING

- Help each child set reasonable personal goals each week—some for now and some for the future.
- Set aside time for some type of recreation each day for rest and relaxation even if it is only reading the paper or watching TV. The key is to know how much rest or recreation is enough.
- Plan major activities for once a week, once a month, and annual events.
- Be reasonable about the expenses of each activity. Here is where discipline will pay off. Consider also the time and physical effort involved and the long-term results.

Include the enjoyment of nature as well as the association of friends, neighbors, and extended family in your plans. Review them monthly. For instance, a five-year-old may be learning to make his bed each day, to put away his own laundry, and to help set the table. He may be needing help with his alphabet or numbers. Having his own chart will help him remember. A small drawing of a bed, some clothes, and a book on the chart could help him check off his goals each day.

A teen-ager may need goals about being on time to work or school, doing homework at a certain time of day or week, and putting his dirty clothes in the hamper. A long-term goal might be to save money for a trip he wants to take with his friends.

Goals for a parent might include personal improvement, like doing exercises, counting calories, or writing in a journal. Other goals might include helping family members do homework. Long-term goals might include paying off bills, purchasing new furniture, or learning a new skill or hobby.

If you have any questions or would like to contact Pearl Philipps call (435) 438-6452 or pearlp@ext.usu.edu

FAMILY COUNCIL CALENDAR

Week	Monthly Plan
Week 1	
Week 2	
Week 3	
Week 4	
Week 5	

Coming Up:

FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Date:_____

Conducting:_____

Secretary:_____

Song:

Thought, Saying, or Poem:

Prayer:

Old Business:

Calendar of Events and Work Schedules:

Current Family Business: (Choose those that are right for your family or add others.)

- **Family and Individual Needs**
- **Family Rules**
- **Family Job Lists**
- **Home Improvement and Maintenance**
- **Family Finances**
- **Meals and Menus**
- **Family Goals**
- **Family Recreation**
- **Extended Family Needs**